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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 23rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AMARI (Tunisia)
(Vice-Chairman)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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In the absence of Mr. Vilchez Asher (Nicaragua), Mr. Amari (Tunisia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued) (A/50/6/Rev.1 (Vol. I and II), A/50/7 and A/50/16)

First reading (continued)

Section 26. Administration and management (continued)

1. Mr. DJACTA (Algeria) said that his delegation wished to draw attention to an issue which it had already raised, at both the previous and the current sessions of the General Assembly: the need to strengthen the secretariat of the Fifth Committee. While the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) had manifested its concern regarding the volume of work of the Committee, it had made no specific recommendations in that regard.

2. His delegation was not satisfied with the answer to its questions provided by the Controller at the previous meeting and it sought a clear response to its request for a comparison of the number of Professional posts attached to the various Main Committees and, in particular, a comparison between the Fifth and the Second Committees.

3. His delegation hoped that, as in past years, the Committee would have staff assigned to it from different departments for its forthcoming informal consultations. In particular, he drew attention to the plan formulated by the previous Chairman to cope with the increasing workload of the Fifth Committee. He believed that that plan was still valid, and he regretted that time constraints during the previous session had prevented its implementation. He suggested that the previous Chairman could be invited to coordinate consultations on the plan, as a matter of urgency, and he sought the views of the Secretariat on his suggestion.

4. Ms. RODRIGUEZ ABASCAL (Cuba) said that her delegation supported the comments by the representative of Algeria: indeed, most delegations speaking at the Committee's previous meeting had recognized the urgent need to strengthen the secretariat of the Fifth Committee, particularly during the most intensive period of its work. She pointed out that the Committee secretariat was also responsible for servicing other bodies, such as the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), and that it would not be sufficient merely to maintain the status quo.

5. With reference to her delegation's earlier question regarding the report of the Secretary-General on the impact of the abolition of 19 posts in Conference Services (A/C.5/49/73), she said that her delegation had not been present when the report had been submitted. She therefore requested that the summary record of the meeting in question should be made available during the informal consultations on the issue.

6. Mr. TEIRLINCK (Belgium) said that, as former Chairman of the Committee, he fully supported the comments made by the representatives of Algeria and Cuba. Without doubt, the proper functioning of the Committee depended almost exclusively on the competence and hard work of its secretariat and, as he had had occasion to experience during his own chairmanship, the fragility of the secretariat placed in jeopardy the work both of the Chairman and of the Committee as a whole. Accordingly, he had requested reinforcements for the secretariat from the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, based on the appropriate recommendations of CPC at its thirty-third session, recommendations which had been endorsed by the General Assembly. Not only were no reinforcements forthcoming, but the services of three staff members formerly seconded to the Committee had been withdrawn. A temporary assistant had been provided, but even that assistant had been withdrawn before the commencement of the fiftieth session.

7. In the light of that experience, it was clear that the Committee should take a firm decision without delay, as only a permanent solution to the problem could ensure the continued functioning of the Committee.

8. Mr. NTONGA (Cameroon) supported the statements by previous speakers calling for the strengthening of the Fifth Committee secretariat in financial, technical, staffing and material terms; such a measure would also benefit CPC. He suggested that consideration should also be given to the strengthening of the secretariats of other bodies dealing with similar issues, such as ACABQ.

9. Mr. ODAGA-JALOMAYO (Uganda), emphasizing the importance of an efficient approach to the reading of the budget, noted that, as most sections in part VIII (common support services) were rather large, it would be preferable for the Committee to proceed section by section so as to give the various proposals proper consideration. In the light of that observation, he regretted that the Committee's consideration the previous day of the eight subsections of section 26 had not been productive and said that his delegation would have to raise further issues during informal consultations. He wished, however, to bring three important points to the Committee's attention.

10. First, with regard to the proposal for five additional posts relating to the system of justice in the United Nations, his delegation believed that the decision should be made after consideration of the Secretary-General's revised proposal on the reform of the internal system of justice, referred to in paragraph VIII.4 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/50/7).

11. Second, his delegation fully supported the views expressed by the representatives of Algeria, Cuba and Canada and by the former Chairman of the Committee on the issue of the Committee's workload and stressed the need to strengthen the resources of the secretariat, through such means as redeployment, provided that redeployment was not at the expense of other priority activities of the Organization.

12. Finally, with regard to the additional seven posts requested for the Peace-keeping Financing Division, referred to in paragraph VIII.8 of the Advisory Committee's report, his delegation remained unconvinced that the proposal for

the transfer of posts from the support account to the regular budget was in the interests of Member States.

13. The CHAIRMAN said, by way of clarification, that the Committee had agreed to consider the budget section by section. If a section had several subsections, delegations could cover all subsections concerned in an inclusive statement or take them up in separate statements, subsection by subsection.

14. Mr. MARCONDES DE CARVALHO (Brazil) supported the views expressed by other speakers and, in particular, by the former Chairman on the need to strengthen the Fifth Committee secretariat. His delegation also wished to hear the views of the Secretariat on how it planned to respond to the Advisory Committee's request for a review of the adequacy of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management (A/50/7, para. VIII.5).

15. Mrs. EMERSON (Portugal) said that, as a member of the Bureau of the Fifth Committee during the forty-eighth session, she fully shared the views expressed by the former Chairman. She drew attention to the need to take great care, when deciding on the redeployment of staff, to ensure that those redeployed had the necessary qualifications for their new functions.

16. Mr. TAKASU (Controller), replying to questions raised during the meeting and at the two meetings held the previous day, said that the Secretariat was fully aware of the vital need to ensure the provision of proper secretariat services for the Fifth Committee. That issue had been reviewed very carefully when the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 had been prepared. While no additional post had been proposed, an administrative decision had been taken to strengthen the Fifth Committee secretariat through the temporary assignment of three officers in the Department of Administration and Management, one from the Programme Planning and Budget Division, one from the Office of Human Resources Management and one from the Office of Conference and Support Services. Those officers would assist the Fifth Committee secretariat when the agenda items relating to their respective offices came up. The Secretariat would monitor the situation to ascertain whether that assistance proved sufficient.

17. With regard to conference services, he noted that the Secretariat had proposed the abolition of 19 posts in the 1994-1995 budget. In 1993, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report, giving the reasons for that measure. The ensuing report (A/C.5/48/73), as well as the Secretary-General's comprehensive study on conference services (A/C.5/49/34 and Corr.1), made it very clear that the abolition of the 19 posts provided for a more satisfactory mix of permanent and temporary staff. Accordingly, the Secretariat had concluded that it was preferable to have a slightly reduced permanent staff structure, which would be augmented with temporary assistance during peak periods.

18. In resolution 49/221 C, the General Assembly had endorsed the findings and conclusions of the comprehensive study on conference services (A/C.5/49/34 and Corr.1), welcomed the efforts made by the Secretary-General to improve conference services, and requested the Secretary-General, within the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, to take into account the possible negative effects, if any, of the elimination of 19 posts in the

Office of Conference and Support Services. The Secretary-General had accordingly proposed the addition of six new translation posts in order to improve the quality of work in certain language services where, as a result of the increasing reliance on self-revision, the quality of output had declined over the years.

19. With regard to the observation of the representative of Canada that the ratio of General Service to Professional staff was approximately 1.5 to 1, he pointed out that the General Service category included not only secretarial staff but also security and field service personnel and local staff. A much more detailed comparative analysis was therefore required.

20. As for the impact of extrabudgetary resources on the regular budget, an issue which had been raised by the United States delegation and by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee, he said that the United Nations received substantial extrabudgetary contributions for its activities in such areas as relief assistance and the provision of technical advisory services. The Advisory Committee had referred, in particular, to the additional support received by the Organization in the form of non-reimbursable loans and trust funds. The Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations provided that such assistance should not result in a financial liability for the Organization; the corresponding programme support costs should therefore be charged. In recent years, in particular, such charges had not been applied to the nearly 100 military personnel who had been seconded to the Organization by Member States for peace-keeping operations, nor to the prosecutors seconded to the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Law Committed in the Territory of the former Yugoslavia. It was important to observe the provisions of the Financial Regulations and Rules on the matter and he appealed for the cooperation and understanding of Member States in that regard.

21. Mr. DJACTA (Algeria) said that he was still not satisfied with the reply given by the Controller. The practice of seconding personnel was incompatible with the need for transparency and accountability and with the recently established Performance Appraisal System. He also wondered whether the seconded personnel had no important tasks to perform in their substantive departments and whether their job descriptions included work during informal meetings of the Fifth Committee. He would appreciate a prompt reply to his question concerning the number of Professional staff assigned to the Second and Fifth Committees, respectively.

22. Ms. RODRIGUEZ ABASCAL (Cuba) said that she was not fully satisfied with the solution proposed by the Secretary-General to strengthen the secretariat of the Fifth Committee. The offer of temporary posts meant that the personnel in question would not be fully trained to carry out the Committee's work, which was very technical and required highly trained experienced staff.

23. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General on the abolition of 19 posts in the Office of Conference Services (A/C.5/48/73), she asked whether it had been discussed in the Fifth Committee.

24. Mr. HANSON (Canada) said that he fully agreed with the Controller that the question of the ratio of General Service to Professional staff needed further analysis. He noted that the ratio of General Service to Professional staff in Conference Services was lower than in any other subsection of section 26 of the proposed programme budget. Higher ratios were to be found in Headquarters support services and in administrative services for Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna.

25. Mr. TEIRLINCK (Belgium) said that a lasting solution must be found to strengthen the Committee's secretariat. It was not enough to provide temporary staff for informal meetings. A permanent Assistant Secretary should be appointed.

26. Ms. BUERGO (Cuba) said that she would welcome the Secretariat's comments on the questions raised earlier by her delegation concerning the early retirement programme for staff, the new Performance Appraisal System and external recruitment.

27. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the comments of delegations concerning the need to strengthen the Committee secretariat had been duly noted and steps would be taken to ensure that the secretariat was strengthened for both formal and informal meetings during the current session of the General Assembly. The budget proposals before the Committee reflected all the concerns that had been raised over the previous two years, including the question of the high ratio of General Service to Professional staff in Geneva and Nairobi.

Section 27. Jointly financed administrative activities (continued)

28. Mr. MUÑOZ (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, expressed concern over the proposed increase in the resources for the remuneration of consultants and experts who acquired price data from private and governmental sources for the cost-of-living surveys undertaken by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). Despite a slight decrease, the amount spent on the travel of members of the ICSC secretariat to the sites where the surveys were carried out continued to be excessive. Other less costly means of conducting such surveys, including outsourcing, should be examined with a view to achieving savings without affecting the quality of the surveys.

29. Mr. KOUZNETSOV (Russian Federation) welcomed the reduction in the proposed expenditure for activities under section 27 and hoped that continued efforts would be made to realize additional savings. He supported the proposals aimed at enhancing the efficiency of the work of ICSC, through, inter alia, a change in the periodicity and length of the Commission's sessions. Savings must not be achieved, however, at the detriment of substantive activities, which were of great importance to Member States. In that connection, he questioned the wisdom of reducing the resources for United Nations usage of the Information Systems Coordination Committee and the International Computing Centre, given the importance to the Organization of advanced information and computing technologies. The proposed reduction in the resource allocation should therefore be reconsidered.

30. Mr. DJACTA (Algeria) noted that, as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) had been encouraged to improve the

content and presentation of its reports. Indeed, there had been a noticeable improvement in the quality of its latest report. He wondered to what extent JIU had participated in the elaboration of the current budget proposals for the Unit and why no representatives of JIU were present at the current meeting of the Committee.

31. Ms. SHEAROUSE (United States of America) agreed with the representative of the European Union on the need to achieve greater savings under section 27. While she also agreed that the secretariats of ICSC and JIU should be strengthened, she wondered whether the management practices of those bodies had been the subject of an audit.

32. Ms. RODRIGUEZ ABASCAL (Cuba) noted the importance of oversight organs to the Organization, particularly at a time of financial crisis. She noted further that the increased allocations proposed for JIU were earmarked for staff training and office automation and said it was regrettable that the staffing table had not been adjusted to reflect the increase in the workload of JIU.

33. Mr. GODA (Japan) said that the decisions and recommendations of ICSC were important for the work of the Organization. Adequate resources should therefore be allocated to the Commission; at the same time, it was important to ensure the cost-effectiveness of expenditure through the use of advanced communication and other technologies.

34. Mr. NKOUNKOU (Congo), referring to paragraph 27.13 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 (A/50/6/Rev.1), sought confirmation that the Cost-of-Living Division would continue to receive the necessary resources to complete its studies on the comparison of housing costs and undertake place-to-place surveys in field duty stations.

35. Mr. MIRMOHAMMAD (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the financing of JIU should be consistent with General Assembly resolutions 48/221 and 48/218 B.

36. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that all procedures relating to the ICSC budget were determined by the statute of that body, which stipulated that the budget of the Commission should be established by the Secretary-General after consultation with the Administrative Committee on Coordination. The Secretary-General had requested ICSC to make maximum savings, and it had duly complied.

37. Referring to paragraph 27.22 of the proposed programme budget, he reminded the Committee that the principal function of ICSC was to determine living costs, and the role of pricing agents had been crucial in that respect. The small agent's fee involved was therefore entirely justified.

38. With regard to JIU, he said that the statute of that body laid down a procedure for estimating costs, and further stipulated that the Unit's budget should fall within the regular budget of the United Nations. That procedure had been scrupulously adhered to.

39. Funds allocated to the Information Systems Coordination Committee (ISCC) had been cut to reflect the decreased role played by that body. The number of posts assigned to the ISCC had been reduced and some posts had been downgraded.

40. He could not recall any management review of an inter-agency organization; it would devolve on the oversight services themselves to initiate such a study.

41. Mr. DJACTA (Algeria) said that, as far as he had been aware, JIU had been financed by participating organizations and not from the regular budget.

42. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the statute of JIU, as decided upon by the General Assembly, stated that the Unit's budget was to form part of the regular budget but that its expenditures should be shared among the participating organizations. The Unit's programme of work was a matter for JIU itself; it was not determined by the Secretariat.

43. Mr. DJACTA (Algeria) asked what percentage of the Unit's budget over the past biennium had been funded from the regular budget and what percentage had been made available from participating organizations.

44. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that 39.94 per cent of expenditures had been provided by participating organizations during the biennium 1994-1995.

Section 28. Special expenses (continued)

45. The CHAIRMAN said that, in the absence of comments by delegations, he took it that the Committee had completed the first reading of section 28 and wished to refer that section to informal consultations for further consideration and appropriate action.

Section 29. Office of Internal Oversight Services

Section 30. Technological innovations

Section 31. Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance

Section 32. Staff assessment

Section 33. International Seabed Authority

Income section 1. Income from staff assessment

Income section 2. General income

Income section 3. Services to the public

46. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), presenting the Advisory Committee's recommendations on sections 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33 and on income sections 1, 2 and 3, said that the Secretary-General had proposed an increase of 23.5 per cent for section 29 (Office of Internal Oversight Services) which was accounted for primarily by the request for 14 additional posts. In the light of its observations in paragraphs X.4 to X.7 of its report (A/50/7), the Advisory Committee had requested that the Board of Auditors should follow up and report as soon as possible on the extent to which the Board's recommendations on the Internal

Audit Division had been implemented. Subject to those observations, ACABQ approved the request for 12 posts.

47. The major project under section 30 (Technological innovations) was the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS). The first phase of IMIS would be completed during the current biennium and, as stated in paragraph XI.3, installation at all major offices should be completed during 1996-1997. During the coming biennium the focus would therefore be on the installation of the system at offices away from headquarters and on the establishment of a long-term maintenance infrastructure, including the necessary training measures. The Advisory Committee recommended approval of $11,967,600 for the project for the coming biennium (para. XI.5).

48. The introduction of IMIS would lead to the redundancy of a number of posts, some of which would be transferred to the maintenance budget. It was currently not known how many posts would be affected, nor what criteria would be used to determine those to be transferred to the maintenance budget. Subject to further clarifications in the Secretary-General's progress report, ACABQ recommended approval of the request for $7,618,400 for the maintenance budget (para. XI.9).

49. The Advisory Committee welcomed the use of IMIS in peace-keeping operations, especially with regard to financial and personnel reporting, procurement and property management, and it hoped that reporting on issues such as peace-keeping would, in consequence, be more timely than it had been in the past (para. XI.10).

50. With regard to the estimates on the optical disk system (paras. XI.11-XI.12), he said the Advisory Committee hoped that every effort would be made to ensure that the system was available to as many Member States as possible. In view of the potential savings to the Organization, the Secretariat should provide assistance to make the system more accessible to permanent missions. As stated in paragraphs XI.6 and XI.12, the Advisory Committee recommended that, once the IMIS and optical disk projects had been completed, estimates for technical innovations should be shown under the sections for the activities to which they related.

51. Referring to the estimates for section 31 (Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance) (paras. XI.13-XI.21), he said that, from information obtained by the Advisory Committee, it appeared that, when alterations or improvement projects were to be deferred owing to a lack of resources or changes in priorities, Headquarters bore the brunt of such decisions, as projects were more often deferred there than at other duty stations. The Advisory Committee requested the Secretary-General to ensure a reasonable balance in the implementation of projects approved for the various duty stations (para. XI.15). In addition, it requested that the sort of information referred to in paragraph XI.14 should be included in future budget submissions.

52. The Advisory Committee had adjusted the estimates for the telecommunications infrastructure (para. XI.17) and for the comprehensive study and development of a master plan for United Nations facilities (para. XI.18). It requested the Secretary-General to examine the possibility of obtaining

reimbursement from extrabudgetary resources for the cost of the improvement and major management of facilities occupied by staff funded from extrabudgetary sources (para. XI.20) and believed that the role of headquarters vis-à-vis offices away from headquarters in the area of maintenance policies required further clarification (para. XI.21).

53. The Advisory Committee had no further comments on sections 32 (Staff assessment) and 33 (International Seabed Authority) or on income sections 1 (Income from staff assessment), 2 (General income) and 3 (Services to the public).

Section 29. Office of Internal Oversight Services

54. Mr. RAMOS (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union had always expressed its concern over the way in which the United Nations had been managing its resources, and also at the lack of corrective measures when cases of mismanagement and negligence had been reported by Member States, the Advisory Committee, or the Board of Auditors.

55. The Office of Internal Oversight Services was the appropriate tool to look after the Organization's assets diligently. The European Union therefore strongly supported the relevant proposals of the Secretary-General contained in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997.

56. The European Union endorsed the Secretary-General's proposal that the functions of the Office should be assigned to four subprogrammes, each with specific responsibilities designed to fulfil the mandate of the General Assembly, and also the proposal that the human resources of the Office should be increased by 11 net posts, assessed to the regular budget, for the following biennium.

57. The deficiencies in administrative management referred to in the recent reports of the Board of Auditors had compelled the European Union to request two types of action from the Office of External Oversight Services: to correct the deficiencies observed in both reports with a view to implementing the recommendations that had been made; and to plan the establishment of good internal practices and procedures in order to prevent the recurrence of similar cases.

58. Mr. KOUZNETSOV (Russian Federation) said that his delegation supported the Office of Internal Oversight Services in its drive to save the limited resources of the Organization and introduce a management culture into the United Nations. Additional measures were, however, needed to improve the situation further. His delegation believed that the proposed allocation of $14.8 million to the Office for the biennium 1996-1997 was justified since the Office had clearly paid for itself: between 15 November 1994 and 30 June 1995 it had been able to make savings of $16.8 million throughout the Organization.

59. Within the Office itself, the Russian Federation supported a ratio of Professional to General Service staff that reflected a more rational organization of work. The current ratio was the lowest in the entire Organization. In many cases, the work of the General Service staff of the

Office bordered on that done by Professional staff and, conversely, Professional staff often had to do tasks traditionally performed by General Service staff. His delegation had therefore been puzzled by the Advisory Committee's refusal to accept the Office's request for two additional General Service posts.

60. Mr. DECOTIIS (United States of America) said that the Office of Internal Oversight Services had been a valuable tool for maximizing the efficiency of the Organization; since its inception, the operations of the Office had resulted in tangible savings. His delegation endorsed the allocation of additional resources to the Office to ensure proper staffing levels and considered the request for 11 additional posts to be reasonable. Internal oversight was a neglected function of the Organization and it should be expanded.

61. Mr. BRISEID (Norway) said that his delegation regarded the allocation of additional resources to the Office of Internal Oversight Services as a priority. The proposed increase in the number of posts was both legitimate and necessary. He reminded the Committee that the number of United Nations mandates had increased in recent years and the related financial transactions which they entailed had also grown in volume and complexity. The need for more vigilant oversight had therefore become imperative.

62. Member States needed to know that their contributions were being spent in an efficient and controlled manner. They had a right to know that the Organization was being managed responsibly. The United Nations now had a cluster of oversight bodies whose function was to point out shortcomings, and it was important that those bodies should cooperate as closely as possible.

63. Ms. RODRIGUEZ ABASCAL (Cuba) said that, while the Office of Internal Oversight Services had done important work, its functions could not be regarded as being consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter or the resolutions of the General Assembly. At no time had the General Assembly decided that oversight activities should be given priority attention. In that regard, her delegation had been astonished at the size of the proposed increase in the allocation of funding for the Office.

64. She was concerned at the trend to move posts financed from extrabudgetary sources to the regular budget, and would like to know on what basis such transfers were being proposed. Moreover, she felt that the narrative of section 29 in the proposed programme budget (A/50/6/Rev.1) should more fully reflect the wording of General Assembly resolution 48/218 B.

65. Her delegation had noted with concern that development had been omitted from the list of United Nations activities in paragraph 29.3 of the proposed programme budget (A/50/6/Rev.1). She also questioned the proposed expenditure on consultants and experts (para. 29.17) and the elimination of extrabudgetary resources for subprogramme 1, dealing with evaluation. On the matter of training, the Controller had indicated on a previous occasion that training would be administered centrally by the Office of Human Resources Management, yet paragraph 29.18 referred to the provision of training. Her delegation would also welcome additional information on the status of the report requested by the General Assembly on oversight of operational funds and programmes.

66. Mr. FATTAH (Egypt) said that his delegation supported the call for a review of the Office of Internal Oversight Services to ensure that it was effectively discharging its functions. He noted that a report by the Office had recently been leaked to the press before it had been made available within the Organization, a situation that must not recur. Internal oversight, while important, was not a priority activity; it was simply a means of strengthening the Organization. In view of the budget constraints, it was important for the needs of developing countries, in particular programmes for Africa, to be reflected in the estimates. His delegation would welcome a breakdown by country of the staff of the Office.

67. Mr. KOSY (Ukraine) said that, given the scant resources available to the Organization, they must be used effectively. In that regard, the Office of Internal Oversight Services had an important role: audits and investigations could reveal shortcomings in the use of resources. His delegation supported the growth rate of 23.5 per cent for the Office.

68. Mr. TOYA (Japan) said that his delegation supported the strengthening of the Office and the additional posts proposed. With respect to the Advisory Committee's failure to support the two General Service posts proposed for subprogrammes 2 and 4, he said that the need for such additional posts should be considered on a case-by-case basis. He would revert to the matter in informal consultations. The work of the Office should be reviewed to ensure that it discharged its functions effectively.

69. Mr. HANSON (Canada) said that his delegation supported the additional resources requested for the Office of Internal Oversight Services. An effective oversight function would more than pay for itself in that it would identify capacity and allow for improved programme delivery in the attainment of the objectives of the Charter. There was a need for both financial and political support for the Office.

70. Mr. JU Kuilin (China) said that, while his delegation, too, supported the work of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, it should be noted that it was not a priority area; its aim was to improve the delivery of priority programmes and meet the Organization's objectives. It followed that the work of the Office could not be equated with priority mandates. The substantial increase in the resources requested for the Office would give cause for concern if the trend continued. In view of the general need for economy, the Office should set a good example and should ensure that its work did not duplicate that of other oversight bodies within the system.

71. Mr. NTONGA (Cameroon) agreed that the oversight function was important and must be strengthened. Internal oversight was not, however, a priority area to be equated with programmes for Africa.

72. Mr. ODAGA-JALOMAYO (Uganda) said that his delegation was encouraged by the positive view taken by some delegations with respect to section 29; he hoped that that view would prevail in the Committee's later deliberations. He supported the views expressed by the representatives of Egypt, Cuba and China, as well as the statement made in the general debate by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Internal oversight was not

an end in itself, but a means of improving efficiency, and its success would depend on work in other areas. The Office should not function at the expense of mandated programmes. Lastly, the figure for consultants under section 29 seemed very high.

73. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that some of the functions of the Office of Internal Oversight Services had been inherited, while others had been mandated by the General Assembly since the Office's establishment. The Secretary-General, in the Foreword to the budget, had referred to three programme priorities and the additional function of oversight. The Office had been established on the basis of an existing unit, and, in the budget outline, the Secretary-General had made clear his intention to build on that base and to seek an increase of some 25 per cent in resources from what had been a low base. No dissenting view had been expressed in the General Assembly during its consideration of the budget outline.

74. Both regular budget and extrabudgetary resources were available to the Office, since it had oversight responsibilities for activities in the two areas. A breakdown of posts was provided in table 29.3 in the proposed programme budget. The areas referred to in paragraph 29.3 reflected the work of the Office to date, which had not included operational activities.

75. An analysis was needed of the General Service staff in the Office of Internal Oversight Services; many of them did not perform secretarial work but provided substantive support in such areas as auditing. There was a reduction of one post under subprogramme 1 owing to a reduction in overhead income from extrabudgetary resources, which meant that the post could no longer be financed.

76. While it was true that training was a centrally administered function, there were exceptions for areas with specialized needs. Under section 29, in particular, there was a need for training in electronic data-processing auditing. The request for consultancy funding also related to specialized areas, such as forensic analysis, where outside expertise was necessary. Lastly, the report on internal oversight of operational funds and programmes requested by the General Assembly was in the course of preparation.

77. Ms. RODRIGUEZ ABASCAL (Cuba), referring to the activities mentioned in paragraph 29.3 of the proposed programme budget, noted that decisions had also been adopted on development activities. With regard to training, she said that other areas which had specialized needs had not been given special provision for training; the resources proposed should be reallocated to the Office of Human Resources Management. Lastly, she asked whether the Office of Internal Oversight Services had staff seconded from Governments, and if so how many were involved and what cost was incurred.

78. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that five staff members had been provided to the Office on a non-reimbursable basis by Germany, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea and the United States of America.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.